

A painting depicting Jesus as a shepherd, wearing a white robe and a dark cloak, holding a staff and looking over a flock of sheep in a landscape. The scene is set in a valley with a river and hills in the background, under a soft, golden light.

The Believer's Rest

a study of Psalm 23

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THE BELIEVER'S REST

a study of Psalms 23

Probably one of the most beloved and well known Bible passages and psalms is Psalm 23. And I dare say that every child who attended Sunday School consistently has learned and memorized these famous verses. The Bible verses you memorize as a child stay with you and even years later you can recall them with warmth and affection.

But Psalm 23 is *more* than just earned points from early days of scripture memorization. Each verse contains greater revelation of God's continued love and grace through the illustration of the shepherd and his sheep.

Let this study reveal more of God's intended *rest* for you as a believer when you see His available provisions for everything you need. His *rest* is available now; you don't have to wait to get to Heaven to receive it, and it doesn't come through your self-efforts.

When you see *who* the God inside of you is, you'll understand more of His immeasurable love, and you'll walk in greater understanding and victory as you receive His abundant grace that provides true *rest* for you.

CHAPTER 1

Recently I had the privilege of teaching Psalm 23 to *my* grandchildren. Three children under the age of 9 eagerly learned each verse and committed the entire Psalm to memory, and even several years later are able to recite it. The Word planted in their minds entered their heart, and there it resides.

Psalm 23, Part 1

a Psalm of David

¹ **"The LORD is my shepherd;** I shall not want.

² He makes me lie down in green pastures.
He leads me beside still waters.

³ He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness
for his name's sake.

- ⁴ Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod
and your staff, they comfort me.
- ⁵ You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.
- ⁶ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.”

Psalm 23:1-6, ESV

In today's world, especially in more metropolitan areas, we really don't see shepherds with their sheep. Actually I'm not sure that I've ever seen a modern-day shepherd in my travels across the United States. Because we live in this modern age, we miss the fullness of what a shepherd is, what he does, and how sheep are.

Jesus called His true followers “sheep” (John 10:4). All sheep need a shepherd. They cannot manage on their own, by themselves (Isaiah 53:6). They need direction and guidance, protection and provision. What a wonderful picture that gives us of Jesus our Shepherd.

The shepherd's focus and job is making sure the sheep are well cared for. In His care they do not lack anything. They have all that they need. The shepherd leads the sheep to pastures where they are fed, full and satisfied. All their needs are met. They find rest and security in His presence because he loves them and keeps them from harm. And, if for some reason they wander away, the shepherd finds them and lovingly brings them back into his presence where they are safe. He does them good, not harm (John 10:14). Isn't that also a picture of Jesus? He is the *good* shepherd.

David was a shepherd. He took care of his father's flock of sheep. He understood the role of shepherd, and he understood sheep. Throughout each day of shepherding he meditated on God's goodness and provision. He saw God as His Shepherd, His provider, His protector, His rest. He continued seeing and experiencing God's faithfulness in his life. His declaration is so strong that it still reverberates in our hearts today:

*“The Lord is **my** Shepherd, I shall not want.”*

I trust that Jesus is your Shepherd because you'll never be in better hands. The Amplified Bible says it this way: *“The Lord is my shepherd [to feed, guide, and shield me], I shall not lack.”*

Take some time today to meditate on God's goodness in your life and all that He has done *for you* through the finished work of Jesus. We'll build on this further in our next study.

CHAPTER 2

In Chapter 1 of our study, we learned more about the heart of a shepherd in lovingly caring for his sheep. We saw David's revelation of the Lord as *his* personal shepherd, always leading him, providing for him, delivering him, and restoring, refreshing him.

¹ **"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want."
Psalm 23:1, ESV**

Charles Spurgeon makes an interesting point in his Exposition of Psalm 23: "*The Psalmist does not say, The Lord is the shepherd of the world at large and leads forth the multitude as his flock, but the Lord is MY shepherd; He is a shepherd to me; He cares for me, watches over me, and preserves me. The words are in the present tense.*" So even now, today, the Lord is *your* Shepherd.

With that picture in mind you can begin to understand more of God's faithfulness in your life, and how good He is. And it's all because *God loves you*, right where you are today.

Knowing that you are loved by God, that He accepts you and approves of you enables you to trust Him. You can say with assurance '*when the Lord is MY shepherd he is well able to supply my needs*'. God's heart is full of love and He IS willing to meet all your needs; therefore, you can declare with certainty of faith '*I shall not want*'. Others may be in want. You will not lack because God's promises to supply all your needs according to His riches in glory through Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:19).

That's the promise of God that allows you to *rest* as a believer. It's not because of anything you've done or can do, but because of what Jesus provided for you through His finished work on the Cross. In fact, it is not as a 'doer' that you receive rest, but as a *believer*.

The Psalmist believed God, and he lived in confident expectation of God's goodness and provision in his life. He rested in God's faithfulness and His

continual provision. Let his testimony in Psalm 23 encourage you and build your faith to *believe* God for what you need.

We'll look at some verses in Ephesians in our next study and find out how they tie into Psalm 23:1. Let your faith grow as you feed more and more on God's Word, and rest in His grace.

CHAPTER 3

In our last chapter we saw that the Psalmist believed God, and he lived in confident expectation of God's goodness and provision in his life (Psalm 23:1). He *rested* in God's faithfulness and His continual provision. How much more rest we have today because of what Jesus has accomplished for us (Ephesians 2:7). Let's look more closely at this connection in terms of our rest.

¹ **“The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.”**
Psalm 23:1

⁶ **“God has raised us up to sit together in heavenly
places in Christ Jesus,
⁷ that He would show the exceeding riches of His
grace to us through Christ.”**
Ephesians 2:6-7

Many times believers may not be *resting* in their spiritual walk. Maybe you've been there: you've made Jesus your Lord, and you continue growing in the Word; but you still feel a need to *do* something more to get God to do more for you. Does that sound familiar? It is not as a 'doer' that you receive rest, but as a believer.

One of the most exciting truths planted deep in my heart is that God has already done everything for me that was needed, that He has placed me in a position of *rest*, and the only thing I need to do is believe His Word and relax (rest in confidence) in what He has already provided for me in Christ. Wow. That's the truth of Ephesians 2:6-7.

You've already been *seated* with Christ. That's the position of *rest*. You don't have to wait until you get to Heaven to experience it because your position has already been secured.

It's no longer you trying to get God to do something for you as in begging Him. It's no longer feeling you have to fulfill certain requirements before He'll do something for you; or feeling unqualified for His blessings. He wants you to *rest* in what He's already done. He has freely provided *everything* you'll ever need. Appropriating His provision is easy. You believe and receive what He's already done. That's the *rest of faith*.

I'm sure you've watched a little child standing at the edge of a swimming pool while the daddy coaxed the child to jump to him. The child hesitates, but sees his daddy's arms are outstretched and his daddy promises to catch him. Trusting his father and believing what he said, the child abandons any fear and jumps joyously into his daddy's arms. The child rests in daddy's presence and provision.

The more you're convinced of God's great love for you, the more you'll experience His presence and provision, and the more your walk with Him will be a walk of rest, not of striving to accomplish it yourself.

We'll continue looking more at this topic of walking in God's rest through the eyes of the Psalmist, and I guarantee you'll get excited about everything that God has *already* provided for *you!*

CHAPTER 4

As we dig into each verse in Psalm 23, we want to see through the eyes of the Psalmist how he walked in God's rest. He wasn't a perfect man, but he had come to a place of complete trust and confidence in God. He had experienced God's lovingkindness and mercy. He walked in God's grace, and he continued with resolute faith experiencing spiritual rest.

¹ **“The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.”**
Psalm 23:1, ESV

As a result of his experience, he declares *because* the Lord is his shepherd, he shall not want. He will not be in lack. That's the voice of faith.

That's the voice of trust. That's *not* the voice of worry or anxiety. It's the voice of believing from the position of *rest*.

"We who have believed do enter into rest."

Hebrews 4:3

The Psalmist was confident that His God would provide all that He needed, and he walked out that truth shepherding his sheep. They looked to him for their food, their water—everything they needed; and he never failed them, just as God never failed him. He later said "*there is **no want** to them that **fear [worship and honor] Him.**" (Psalm 34:9) He rested in God's faithfulness. Had he known Philippians 4:19, he would have emphatically echoed Paul's declaration: "*My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*"*

When you know that God is your supplier, your provider, you can rest easy in trusting Him to bless you beyond natural means. Don't see God as stingy and unwilling to give you anything. See Him as a loving God who gave you His Son, and through *His* finished work has made you an heir to all that He has. "*...heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.*" (Romans 8:17)

Your place of *rest* is in God's provision through Jesus. He will supply your needs and more. Don't look at your lack. Look to your Supplier who is able to do exceedingly more than you can think or imagine because of His life working in you. That's your place of rest as a child of God.

CHAPTER 5

There's so much in each verse of Psalm 23 that we don't want to miss anything, and today we're finally looking at verse 2. We've seen the Shepherd's love and provision for his sheep because they did not lack anything. Here the Psalmist shows the provision of God's peace.

² **"He makes me lie down in green pastures.**

He leads me beside still waters."

Psalm 23:2, ESV

A frightened sheep will not lie down, anywhere. Instead they will run around frantically, unable to eat until the shepherd calms them with his voice and

his touch. Once assured that all is safe, the sheep can enjoy eating and then calmly *rest* or lie down in green pastures.

How often have you run around in a frantic state of mind because of something you heard on the news or something your doctor told you? Is your first response one of fear and panic or one of faith? The voice of Jesus, your Shepherd says don't be afraid. "*Peace I leave with you, My Peace I give unto you: not as the world gives, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*" (John 14:27)

"And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep [guard] your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:7) His Peace is able to keep your heart at rest and your mind at ease, peaceful. No worries. Jesus is *your* Peace.

The more you feed on God's Word, the more peaceful you are and the more rest you experience as a child of God. "*Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed [focused] on Thee: because he trusts in You.*" (Isaiah 26:3) "*And let the peace of God rule in your heart...*" (Colossians 3:15) You can allow the chaos and fear around you to rule your heart or you can let God's peace take over and calm you as you *rest* in His peace. Keep your focus on Him and then *lying down* in green pastures is easy because you're at *rest* in God's unfailing, never-ending peace; and you're confident that wherever He leads you will be safe.

A sheep will not even drink at a stream of rapidly moving water. Any movement makes them uneasy. But notice in verse 2 that the Psalmist says God leads him *beside still waters*. There's an interesting meaning in the Hebrew word "still". The word is 'menuchah' and is found some 21 times in the Bible and translated as "rest". So applying the Hebrew meaning to what the Psalmist tells us we learn that the *still waters* are "waters of rest".

I encourage you today to walk in God's Peace—the waters of His rest. You'll find nourishment, satisfaction, enjoyment, and peace in the pastures of His Word, refreshed by the waters of His rest.

CHAPTER 6

From the Psalmist's testimony of God's provision throughout Psalm 23, we see that it is complete. God hasn't left anything out or forgotten anything. God is concerned about everything that takes place in our lives, from the smallest detail to the hugest obstacle. The picture He provides in these verses show His care and provision for you and I when He's our shepherd.

³ **“He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.”**
Psalm 23:1-6, ESV

He *restores* my soul and He *leads* me in paths-avenues-that are righteous and good. God's a restorer, and He is able to restore you from the inside out. That's better than a surgical procedure that may only give you a face lift. The Hebrew word for *righteousness* is [*Jehovah*] *Tsidkenu*, God our righteousness. You and I can't be in right standing with God on our own, from our works or anything that we try to do. But God has become *our* righteousness through Jesus, and He's not mad at you.

When God looks at you, He sees His Son's finished work, enabling you to enter boldly into His presence and enjoy His fellowship. He loves you and daily restores His image in you. When you see yourself as truly loved of God, you'll be changed, transformed, restored and walking in paths of rightness as He leads and guides you each day.

Let His Word restore you. Let it renew your mind, your thinking. The more you know His love, the more you'll walk in His righteousness.

CHAPTER 7

We're concentrating on verse 4 today in our study of Psalm 23. Picture the shepherd leading his sheep through a peaceful, quiet valley but on both sides of the valley are treacherous cliffs, falling rocks and potential landslides, an approaching storm, and the sound and threat of wolves nearby.

⁴ **“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod
and your staff, they comfort me.”
Psalm 23:4, ESV**

Shepherds during Bible times would take the sheep into the green pastures and by still waters before leading them back to the sheepfold usually protected with a rock wall on all sides and a small opening big enough for the sheep to enter and for the shepherd to lie across, as sentry guard. During times of travel the sheep *could* encounter danger. The Psalmist draws on his personal experience when he gives us the picture of the gentleness yet strength of the shepherd who protects his sheep.

Even in the midst of the *shadow* of death, the shepherd’s rod and staff provide direction and clarity, safety and protection. Even when howling wolves are within view appearing as *the shadow of death*, the sheep stay protected as they gather around the shepherd. He fends off anything that would try to hurt the sheep. They recognize his voice and won’t follow another shepherd.

Notice that the Psalmist said there is no need to fear when the shepherd is near. I believe that *fear* is one of the most active devices the enemy uses to keep us from walking in God’s supernatural provision. When we fear more than we believe God, our focus is wrong. God’s ability is far bigger than anything we encounter in this life. Our God is able to do exceeding abundantly above and beyond what we can ask or even think because of His power working in you and I. That’s God’s grace. That’s God’s supernatural provision through Jesus. When you factor in all that Jesus has given you, you win every time; and anything that comes against you must leave. Perfect love casts out fear (1 John 4;18). That’s the perfect love of Jesus for you. When you receive and embrace His love, you’ll not walk in fear.

God is able to make all grace abound to you in every situation you face in life. He is *more than able*. Draw on His ability, His power, His love and grace today for what you need. He’s gently leading you into His goodness so you can enjoy ALL of His provisions today and in all of your tomorrows.

CHAPTER 8

You won't be able to see the revelation of God's power at work in verse 5 of Psalm 23 without understanding verses 1-4, so standing on the foundation of verses 1-4, we now move to verse 5.

⁵ **“You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.”**
Psalm 23:5, ESV

The picture here in verse 5 is a daunting one to say the least—you *prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies*. But without understanding and revelation in God's provisions of love and grace, verse 5 leaves you feeling inadequate in yourself.

But praise God, He hasn't left us alone, to go it alone. As our Good Shepherd, God continues to show His faithfulness to us, His abundant provisions, His peace, His restoration so when we may face the *giants of the land*, He has already gone before us, prepared a table filled with all that we need to overcome any enemy that comes against us. That's what the Psalmist experienced more than once, and that's what you can expect, also.

Picture a banqueting table longer than you've ever seen before. It sits out in the open, and spread across the white table cloth are delicacies, yummy treats—your favorite things—but that's not all! Everything you need to live and walk in God's supernatural provision is before you—daily bread and provision, healing/health, safety and protection, peace, joy, and so much more. It's all there waiting for you to step up, take your place, and start enjoying the banquet.

But wait! Not too far away you hear the sound of war. You see evil approaching, fear lingers in the shadows.

Yet the banqueting table is ready for you to dig in and enjoy it all. The serving bowls are full and actually overflowing. You can have as much as you want, the provisions never run out.

Can you see the table of God's provisions? Can you see His abundant blessings ready to be poured out in your life? Can you see His healing ready for you to take? Can you see His image, His likeness in you, without shame or guilt? Can you see His peace enveloping you?

God has set *His Table* before you, and His provisions are available because of Jesus finished work. You don't have to beg God for anything. The world will try to steer you away from His table. The world will say it's foolishness to believe for God's prosperity. The world will only see you as you *were*, not as you are in Christ Jesus. The world will tell you God doesn't heal anymore, or that you're not worth healing. What the world tells you are lies. God's Word tells you otherwise, and besides, you **see** His table in front of you filled with all His goodness.

His love and grace will enable you to life strong and mighty in Him. Don't wait to partake at His table. It's spread out before you, so take what you need and enjoy God's fellowship at His banqueting table.

CHAPTER 9

We see another picture of God's love, care, provision, and rest for us in our in the second part of verse 5 today. You may think it's a strange picture of the shepherd pouring oil on the sheep's head, but if you don't understand the significance and need for the oil, then you miss a very important point.

⁵ “You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.”
Psalm 23:5, ESV

Because sheep are often subjected to viruses, parasites, or infection, as a preventative measure a good shepherd will anoint or apply oil to the head of the sheep. The oil flows down the sheep's head to its eyes, nose, ears, and mouth, all vulnerable areas. It soothes and heals. The shepherd will also use the oil as a lubricant for prods and cuts the sheep inflict on each other.

The sheep cannot get rid of viruses or sickness on their own. They need the help of the shepherd; and a good shepherd provides healing. When the shepherd does, the sheep easily rest in his provision and experience wholeness, restoration.

In Isaiah 61 we see that Jesus, our Good Shepherd, was anointed to preach the gospel to the poor, heal the brokenhearted, bring deliverance to the captives, and sight to those who were blind, provide liberty and deliverance to those held captive or oppressed (Isaiah 61:1; Luke 4:18-21; Acts 10:38).

Because of Jesus' finished work at the Cross, He is your healer today. He wants you to walk in health and wholeness, nothing broken, nothing missing. The Psalmist understood the power of healing and wholeness through anointing the sheep. The *sheep* rested in the shepherd's care and healing because *the shepherd's* cup did not stop; it continued to overflow.

That's the place of *rest* for you as a believer. God's provision continues today, and His cup continues to overflow. You need only receive as He pours His healing and grace over you, and you do that by faith.

CHAPTER 10

In our study of Psalm 23 today we're looking specifically at verse 6. Keep in mind the picture we saw from verse 5 with the overflowing cup of God's provision never running out.

⁶ **“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow
me all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.”**
Psalm 23: 6, ESV

God's goodness and mercy is like that continually, day in and day out. Every day of your life you can expect to experience God's blessings.

That's what the sheep experienced as they followed their shepherd. He didn't lead them into danger or leave them out on their own to find their way back to the sheepfold. His goodness covered them 24/7. His mercy gave them *more* they needed. They were blessed in the shepherd's presence. They didn't need to go elsewhere. They were filled, full, and completely satisfied in *His* provision, in fellowship with Him.

That's the same place of rest for you as a believer—completely satisfied in all that God has done for you—completely filled with His love and grace which continues to grow and deepen in times of fellowship with Him. When you experience His love and acceptance unrestricted, you don't have to strive any longer to please God. You don't have to do more to be sure He approves of you. He sees you in His son, Jesus, and He's already approved of you, so the only left is to *receive* the overflowing cup of His goodness, mercy, love, and grace.

Most assuredly the Psalmist says—no doubt about it—God's goodness and mercy continues to surround you. In that assurance is the *rest of faith*

because God's provided everything else. *Rest* in His goodness to *you* and enjoy sweet fellowship with Him.

CHAPTER 11

The Psalmist declared by faith, looking yet ahead, that he would forever be in God's presence, whether here on earth or in Heaven when he passed from this life. He was already convinced of God's goodness, His mercy, love, protection, grace, and provision while he lived. He expected nothing less when he eventually would enter his eternal home.

⁶ "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow
me all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever."
Psalm 23: 6, ESV

The Psalmist was a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22). He knew the importance of staying in God's presence day in and day out, no matter what was going on with the sheep on any given day. He had many hours to enjoy God's fellowship, to learn His heart of love and acceptance. He enjoyed worshipping God in song. He had "*church*" every day and didn't get tired of it. God's presence enveloped him, filled and energized him. That's why he could say "*...in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.*" (Psalm 16:11)

The joy of the Lord was his strength (Nehemiah 8:10). He continued drawing on it through times of trouble, war, persecution, and more. That's why he could dance before the Lord, and worship with a heart full of thanksgiving. God's joy bubbled up and spilled out to others.

Joy is a spiritual force that draws you out of the mulleygrubs of life and lifts you far above them. You've already been seated with Christ in Heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6). That's your position of authority as a child of God. That's the position of *rest*. "*To be seated in Christ is to rest, to trust in Him, and to receive everything our beautiful Savior has accomplished on our behalf.*" (Joseph Prince) His joy IN you raises you above the earthly elements. The more you renew your mind in God's Word, the more you see and understand the fullness of His joy operating in you.

The Psalmist renewed his mind in the things of God that he knew at the time. He didn't have the privilege of the New Testament as we have today, but he still knew the presence of God that never changes.

Let your mind be renewed in God's Word and you won't have trouble believing God is good and that He loves you. You will rest in His provision.



In these six verses of Psalms 23 you've learned of God's goodness and His love. You've seen His ever-abiding grace and provision that is available today, as you walk in a new level of spiritual rest now. You've experienced His fellowship and presence as you've renewed your thinking. You've come to *rest* in His provision for you because He loves *you*.

Take the truth of these six verses and continue walking in them daily. Remember that He *is* a good shepherd, leading and guiding you. His provision and rest is available 24/7 – whenever you need it.